

Testimony of John O. Schwartz related to:

H.B. 5389 "An act concerning collateral consequences of a criminal record"

Labor and public employees committee

Good Afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, distinguished members of the committee,

My name is John Schwartz, I am a resident of East Haddam, a registered voter and recovery center manager at the Windham Recovery Community center in Willimantic CT. Thank you for hearing my testimony regarding H.B. 5389: "An act concerning collateral consequences of a criminal record".

My work primarily focuses on supporting members of the Windham/Willimantic community in making positive and fundamental changes in their lives based on their hopes and desires for better lives.

Dealing with a substance use disorder can be challenging, frightening and often both emotionally and physically painful. Adding the myriad additional and largely unnecessary barriers to establishing a "normal" life when burdened with a criminal record, particularly a felony conviction, can often lead an individual to a state of hopelessness which, in turn, can lead to that individual re-engaging in patterns of thought and behavior diametrically opposed to the goals that they wish to pursue. I regularly witness members of the WRCC community experience the consequences of being turned away time after time when seeking employment, housing or other basic needs based on their "criminal history" which is often years or decades old. This almost inevitably leads to a state of despondency which, if not addressed can begin the cycle of relapse, arrest, incarceration, treatment, Halfway or sober house etc. Or, given the significant drop in tolerance which accompanies periods of incarceration, overdose and death. H.B. 5389 would lend significant support to those seeking to break the cycle of addiction, incarceration and misery for thousands of Connecticut residents and their families and facilitate their transformation from persons living on the fringes of society to fully engaged tax-paying community members.

I strongly urge the committee to support this bill for the benefit of all Connecticut residents.

Respectfully submitted,

John O. Schwartz